



# HOW TO TRANSPORT YOUR FLOWERS

You've grown some blooms and want to take them to a show, but how do you do that? There is no ideal way – we all have our own ways of doing things. You need to secure blooms so they don't bash against each other and get damaged in the car. Top growers often secure each bloom to a split cane which is then secured to a bucket or container for carrying. Often the canes can be secured to stems while on the plant – helpful as a gauge to cutting. Some of us don't *quite* go to those lengths, but we do have various ways of securing our blooms for transport. Most of us have to cram them in a car, so there is a limit as to how much space we can afford to give the individual blooms unless we want to hire a van. Some people even like to stage at home and transport the finished exhibit to the show – that takes up space, but can be effective if you are only going a short way and only have a few exhibits. Do whatever works for you. We'll start by describing some general techniques and end with a more detailed description of the 'Rolls Royce' approach used by Roger Downting.



*A full car load - and flask!*

The first tip is to take vases or containers to the plants and cut the blooms there. Then take the blooms to a shed or garage where you can do a final selection of what looks good enough to take to the show. Three broad methods to transport the blooms in the car are shown here.

- (1) For small blooms like collarettes, or pompons, you can usually get away with putting them loose in a vase, which can then be tied into the corner of a crate. A large crate can carry 4 such vases with space in the middle.
- (2) A second approach uses a milk crate with empty milk bottles. Each of these 12 bottles is filled about 1/3rd full with water. Slightly larger blooms like waterlillies and miniature cactus can be transported like this – usually two or three blooms carefully placed in the bottle stops them moving around. Of course, you can take fewer blooms and individually tie them to the crate or cane framework.
- (3) For larger blooms, requiring extra care, use a large/tall bucket with a series of holes drilled around the circumference. Use wide (50mm) chicken wire in the bottom to stop the stems from moving and about 75 mm of water. Each stem is directly tied to the bucket with a pipe cleaner (or soft string) – a set can easily be reused





many times. Tied this way it is possible to carry the buckets with the blooms all fully secured. Slightly shorter buckets, which use the same pipe cleaner system, are useful for shorter stems.

If you want to see the 'Rolls Royce' method of transporting dahlias then look no further than our very own Roger Downting! Roger has had lots of experience carrying blooms to shows and has perfected a brilliant technique. Roger uses very large buckets (25 litre plasterer's buckets or similar containers) drilled with holes around the top. The numerous holes allow for flexibility in where blooms are placed – which maximises the amount you can carry in a small space. These containers are tall enough to support the long straight stems necessary for showing – but do check the height of your car load space! At the bottom of the bucket, Roger uses chicken wire to stop the blooms slipping. The stems are attached to split canes with soft material, such as pipe cleaners or nylon tights (as shown here with blooms of *Roger's Choice* – a small decorative). The split canes (with blooms attached) are secured to the bucket using cable ties (or similar). The difference between this approach and the simple approach of directly tying to the bucket - described above in point (3) - is that it allows even longer/more secure stems. Roger usually carries three blooms for a vase, plus a spare in case of emergency! Each of these large buckets can hold enough blooms for two vases of smaller-sized blooms. Extra blooms can also be packed into the centre of the bucket using more split canes across the diameter of the bucket.



The final stage is to load the car - don't do that until just prior to the departure (to avoid damping off). Find out how many crates and buckets stack in the car. There is nothing worse than a bucket falling over in the car while on the road – a valuable lesson in making sure they are firmly wedged in! For Neal Hatch, a full load going to a show like Taunton is a single large black crate with 4 corner vases (for collarettes or other cut flowers) and a central small flower bucket (poms), two 12-compartment milk crates (waterlilies and min cactus) and 5 or 6 plasterer's buckets with individually tied stems for all other blooms. Make sure you leave room for the flask!

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